Balochistan MPAs to get closed-door update on security

Lawmakers express concern over internet, transport shutdown during the provincial assembly session

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Balochistan Assembly Speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai announced on Wednesday that members of the opposition and treasury benches will receive an in-camera briefing today (Thursday) on the province's law and order situation.

The move came after multiple members expressed grave concerns over deteriorating security in the region during the assembly session.

The session began behind schedule with Jamaat-i-Islami Balochistan's Emir Maulana Hidayatur Rehman taking the floor to highlight the worsening conditions.

"The internet, transport services and highways are closed, and now QESCO and the NHA have also been ordered to halt their work," he said.

Other lawmakers echoed his concerns, demanding the government take concrete steps and brief the assembly on the matter, which prompted the speaker's ruling.

During the session, members also raised issues of severe utility shortages. BAP MPA Agha Umar Ahmedzai said that the Sariab area was being discriminated against with a lack of electricity and gas throughout the day, staging a walk-out in protest.

PPP MPA Ali Madad Jattak added that gas was unavailable in both Sariab and Quetta, causing distress to residents.

JUI MPA Asghar Tareen said the provision of Sui gas is a matter of life and death, not a luxury, and urged the chief minister to address the issue with the federal government.

He also criticised Rehman, a member of the treasury benches, for his critiques. Mr Tareen remarked that if Rehman wished to criticise the government, he should move to the opposition seats.

On the legislative front, the assembly approved the Balochistan Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships Bill. The Balochistan Judicial Academy (Amendment) Bill and the draft of the Balochistan Anti-Beggary Bill were referred to relevant standing committees for further review.

The House also approved the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) concerning the audit report of the Balochistan Textbook Board. PAC Chairman Asghar Tareen presented the report before its approval.

In response to other civic complaints, Speaker Achakzai summoned the Quetta Commissioner to his chamber for Thursday after JUI-F member Shahida Rauf drew attention to public inconvenience caused by road excavation and traffic jams in the city.

Questions related to the Quetta Development Authority (QDA) and the Department of Labour & Manpower were deferred due to the absence of the concerned provincial ministers.

RAWALPINDI: Pakistani and Indonesian army personnel participate in the joint military exercise, Shaheen Strike-II.—PPI

Senate panel urges SBP to end forced abayas at banks

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee and the government agreed on Wednesday to ask the State Bank of Pakistan to persuade commercial banks to stop mandating that their female employees wear abayas, arguing women should not be compelled to adopt a specific religious look.

The pledge came during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance where lawmakers also learnt of a plan by tax authorities to install artificial intelligence-based cameras across 17 major industrial sectors to combat widespread tax evasion.

The discussion on dress codes was initiated by Senator Zarqa Suharwardy, who informed the committee that some Islamic banks were forcing female staff to wear abayas.

"Pakistani women already use decent clothing and should not be forced to wear abayas at Islamic bank counters to give a religious look," she said.

The committee, presided over by Senator Saleem Mandviwala, concluded that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) should intervene. A representative of the SBP present at the meeting clarified that official dress code policies currently varied from bank to bank.

Other committee members voiced strong opinions on the matter. Mr Mandviwalla noted that Islamic banks often charge higher interest rates than conventional banks under the guise of Islamic financing. Senator Farooq Naik called the reported mandate a violation of personal freedom.

Compelling a female banker to wear an abaya, Mr Naik said, was like "forcing somebody to grow beard against his will", but he questioned how the central bank could effectively police such internal bank policies.

Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani, stating he was unaware of "such an odd compulsion", assured the committee he would raise the matter directly with the SBP governor.

The committee members recommended the SBP issue a regulatory notification requiring banks to enforce a "modest, professional dress" code rather than a specific religious garment.

In a separate matter, the committee was briefed on a major anti-tax evasion initiative. Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Rashid Langrial announced the agency would install AI-based video analytical cameras at production facilities in 17 major sectors after uncovering a significant tax theft.

Mr Langrial told the committee the move was prompted by the discovery of an annual tax theft worth over Rs 30 billion in the tiles and ceramics sector alone. "AI based video analytical cameras were being installed at production units of 17 major sectors to control tax evasion," he said.

The chairman recounted facing opposition from a private Chinese firm that offered to increase its tax payments if it could be exempt from the camera vigilance, citing concerns over trade secrets.

Mr Langrial said he rejected the offer, telling the committee that such a suggestion was a "breach of the parliamentary panel's privilege".

He said the AI-based cameras would be deployed across all targeted sectors, including cement, sugar, tobacco and tiles.

He reported the initiative was already showing success, with the sugar and cement sectors expected to contribute an additional Rs76 billion and Rs102bn in revenue this year, respectively.

The committee also addressed a staggering Rs 375 trillion figure for financial irregularities reported by the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP).

AGP representative Tafakhir Ali explained the sum was a "typographical error" in an executive summary and had been corrected to Rs9tr. He said a fact-finding inquiry into the error was underway.—Khaleeq Kiani

Levies official martyred

QUETTA: A senior Levies officer was martyred during an armed attack on a checkpost in Qila Abdullah on Wednesday.

The Qila Abdullah deputy commissioner said the attackers were involved in robberies on the Quetta-Chaman highway and other serious crimes. When the Levies foiled an attempt to hijack a passenger van, the criminals opened fire on the check post, resulting in the martyrdom of post in-charge Dafadar Saadullah.

"After the attack, the culprits fled, abandoning one of their vehicles, which was later set on fire by local residents," the deputy commissioner said, adding that an operation has been launched against the group.

A senior police officer said the criminals' hideout in the nearby mountains has been cordoned off, and security forces have begun a search operation to arrest their ringleader, Faqir Muhammad, dead or alive.

He said Faqir Muhammad is wanted by Levies and police in around 15 murder cases. Frontier Corps personnel have also been called in to assist in the operation. —Saleem Shahid

CM Bugti declares 'zero tolerance' for poppy cultivation

Civil-military leaders hear public grievances at Loralai Jirga

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards poppy cultivation and terrorism, with Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti announcing that individuals involved in poppy cultivation will face placement on the Fourth Schedule and confiscation of their lands.

"The influential people were found involved in poppy cultivation," CM Bugti said at a Grand Jirga at Loralai Cantonment. He affirmed that the government has decided to "take action against all involved in this dirty business without any discrimination".

Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Corps Commander Rahat Saleem, and other high-ranking civil and military officials attended the gathering. Those present included IGFC North Major General Atif Mustafa, IG Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir Khan, and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan.

In a joint address, Bugti, Corps Commander Saleem, and Governor Mandokhail said the purpose of the Jirga was to directly hear public grievances, assess them, and take practical steps toward sustainable solutions.

Participants raised issues concerning law and order, electricity and clean water shortages, deteriorating roads, and challenges in the education and health sectors. The CM announced that problems under the district administration's authority would be resolved immediately, while others would be escalated for long-term solutions, adding that this was the seventh Grand Jirga, with the next scheduled for the Nasirabad.

CM Bugti emphasised the importance of tribal cooperation for peace and development. "We are united, and God willing, we will defeat the enemy together," he said. He added that the government is always accessible for public service and that they need not wait for jirgas. —Staff Correspondent

Corruption risks

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and oversight of state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

It also identified an overly complex and opaque tax system administered by tax and customs authorities operating with insufficient capacity, management and oversight.

On top of this was a judicial sector that is organisationally complex, is unable to reliably enforce contracts or protect property rights due to problems with efficiency, antiquated laws, and the integrity of judges and judicial personnel.

Procurement, SIFC

The IMF demanded that all public sector procurements should eliminate preferences for SOEs, including special provisions for direct contracting and mandatory use of e-governance procurement for all state transactions within 12 months.

It called for immediately producing and making public the first annual report of the SIFC, including information on all investments it facilitated, including concessions provided (tax, policy, regulatory and legislative), along with detailed rationale and the outcomes.

It said that given its broad and disparate organisational functions and authority, it was essential for the SIFC to develop explicit protocols for undertaking its activities and enhanced transparency arrangements to enable effective oversight and accountability.

It also questioned the SIFC's creation in the first place and the immunity its staff enjoyed in decision-making. It said the council was created by amendment in the Board of Investment (BoI) law to accelerate investment and privatisation efforts, but the BoI continued to exist.

It noted that corruption vulnerabilities also have a significant impact on the fiscal performance of the public sector. While other factors also contribute to public sector performance, Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio is low and falling, mainly due to the complexity of the tax system, frequent changes in rules, and low public trust in the government.

It also noted that the government retained significant discretionary power over how public money was spent, given significant differences between enacted budgets and how public money was actually spent, in an environment with limited public transparency or parliamentary engagement in budgetary matters.

Discretionary allocations are skewed towards districts represented in the government or the senior bureaucracy, reflecting the vulnerability of the system to political influence. This resulted in low return on public investment.

Opposition leader's fate

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constitutional bench on the pleas (Omer Ayub Khan and others vs. FOP & Syed Shibli Faraz vs. FOP). Through this order, the SC set aside the earlier decision of the Peshawar High Court that had adjourned writ petitions sine die, and directed the high court to determine the maintainability of those petitions and dispose of them accordingly.

The NA spokesperson confirmed that as highlighted in the response letter, the matter concerning the disqualification of Mr Ayub, former opposition leader, was presently sub judice before the Peshawar High Court.

On the other hand, the ECP has drawn the attention of contesting candidates for by-elections in 13 constituencies of the National and the Punjab assemblies, announcing that no person shall convene, hold or attend any public meeting and no person shall promote or join in any procession within the area of the constituency during a period of 48 hours ending at midnight following the conclusion of the poll. "Any person who contravenes these provisions of law shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with a fine which may extend to Rs100,000 or with both," the ECP announcement said.

The constituencies are: NA-18 Haripur, PP-73 Sargodha-III, NA-96 Faisalabad-II, PP-87 Mianwali-III, NA-104 Faisalabad-X, PP-98 Faisalabad, NA-129 Lahore-XIII, PP-115 Faisalabad-XVIII, NA-143 Sahiwal-III 5, PP-116 Faisalabad-XIX, NA-185 D.G. Khan-ll, PP-203 Sahiwal-VI, PP-269 Muzaffargarh-ll.

Accordingly, the election campaign for by-elections in the above constituencies shall come to an end at midnight between Nov 2 and 22. The political parties and the candidates were requested to follow the provisions of law and exercise self-restraint so that the poll is held in an orderly and peaceful manner on Nov 23.

When contacted, political analyst Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, who is also president of Pildat, said if the matter of appointment of the leader of the opposition was sub judice as claimed by the NA speaker, then there was no harm in holding a by-election of any constituency including the one from which former leader of the opposition Omar Ayub had won.

However, he added, if the sub-judice matter was Mr Ayub's election rather than his appointment as leader of the opposition, then the ECP should not have announced the schedule for the by-election in his constituency.

Idea of judges' en masse resignation

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already been nominated as FCC judges.

'Strong institutional response'

In the meeting, the judges noted with regret the resignation of their two colleagues and emphasised that the judiciary must come up with a strong institutional response.

When a few judges suggested sending a formal letter to the government, the CJP reminded them that judges should have approached him directly instead of writing letters.

As per the source, the CJP further said that the Supreme Court retained the power of judicial review to assess the constitutionality of legislation, but only after the passage of the law, not before it. Thus the court cannot stop parliament from making laws.

Upon insistence for a strong institutional response, one of the participants floated the idea that all of them, including the CJP, should tender their resignations if they wished to register a meaningful institutional protest beyond constitutional mechanisms, the source claimed.

The proposal, however, was met with silence, indicating a lack of agreement on part of the members attending the meeting. Subsequently, the meeting ended without a consensus.

PML-N grouse

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new chief minister from the PPP to complete the two-and-a-half-year term," he said.

'Baseless'

However, PPP Balochistan President Sardar Umar Gorgaij and provincial assembly parliamentary leader Mir Sadiq Umrani rejected the claim of the PML-N senator, saying that Mr Bugti enjoyed the complete support of all the coalition partners.

All speculations in this regard are "baseless and desire of a PML-N senator", they noted in a statement issued on late Wednesday night.

"The PPP central leadership has made no decision about changing the chief minister in Balochistan," they noted.

They said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had already said the party did not believe in changing the chief ministers of the party.

"All coalition partners are with [CM] Sarfraz Bugti and they have no intention to change the PPP's chief minister." They said if Senator Domki had some reservations or complaints, he should take them up with CM Bugti.

"I reject all such claims and rumours," Mr Gorgaij said.

Punjab forms 40 JITs to probe cases against TLP

Continued from Page 1

of police (SP), sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), station house officer (SHO), investigating officer (IO), a representative from the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in the rank of deputy superintendent of police (DSP), and any co-opted member.

For the cases lodged in Lahore, each JIT will have five members, including the SP investigation, DSP investigation, IO, a representative from the CTD in the rank of DSP, and any co-opted member. The notifications further added that the "convener of the JIT shall depute one of the members of the JIT for the purpose of submission of the report", as required by Section 19(1) of the ATA 1997.

In recent weeks, the Punjab government has intensified action against the TLP following a ban imposed on the party after a violent clash between TLP protesters and law enforcement personnel in Muridke last month.

The now-banned group had launched a protest march in support of Gaza and Palestine, planning to reach Islamabad and stage a demonstration outside the US embassy. Last week, a Lahore police official told *Dawn* that they had arrested 1,250 key TLP members, including their financiers and the workers wanted in over 100 criminal cases.

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TENDER NOTICE

Bids are invited for the following:

Tender No.	Description	Closing Date/ Time
PD/O&M/ PT/32143/ 25	Supply of spares for heat exchanger & gas coolers	09 Dec, 2025 1500 hrs.
PD/O&M/ PT/32145/ 25	Supply of rotor for instrument air compressor	09 Dec, 2025 1500 hrs.
PD/E&C/ PT/32166/ 25	3D time and depth seismic data re-processing/ AVO inversion services for Sui (D&PL)	18 Dec, 2025 1500 hrs.
PD/O&M/ PT/32170/ 25	Supply of instrument items (PCB, surge protector, chromatograph kit etc.)	09 Dec, 2025 1500 hrs.

All bids will be opened 30 minutes after the bids closing date/ time.

Extension in Bid Closing & Opening Date

Closing and opening date of the following tender has been extended as follows:

Tender No.	Description	Published On	Revised Closing Date/ Time
PD/P&C/ PT/31817/ 25	Supply, installation and commissioning of fire water engine control panel at Hala Field	07 Oct, 2025	08 Dec, 2025 1500 hrs.

Bidders who have already submitted/sent their proposals (bids) may take them back and resubmit the same before the revised closing date and time mentioned above.

All bids will be opened 30 minutes after the revised bids closing date/ time.

Tender notice / detailed instructions are available on PPRA website at **www.ppra.org.pk** Tender documents are available online and bids are also required to be submitted online through PPL's e-procurement portal at **https://eprocurement.ppl.com.pk** for details see 'Instruction for Bidders Section' of tender documents. PPL reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal.

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